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ABSTRACT

This document presents a summary of major findings of the Hmong Resettlement Study, a national survey of the conditions, issues, and problems affecting Hmong resettlement in the United States. The summary is organized within the framework of three major questions: (1) what has been the resettlement experience of the Homng? (2) what resettlement efforts and economic strategies have provided effective results for the Hmong? and (3) how might current strategies be changed to result in more effective resettlement and long-term adjustment of the Hmong? Among the most important findings of the study is the variability of Hmong resettlement in different locales. It is generally concluded that economic prospects are most favorable for school-aged Hmong, for whom assimilation is much easier. The report emphasizes findings relating to secondary migration, the movement of Hmong away from their initial resettlement site. Other issues discussed include: (1) how Hmong are faring in terms of employment, dependence, and adjustment; (2) the areas of employment in which Hmong have been particularly successful; (3) impediments to effective resettlement; (4) problem-solving approaches; (5) external and internal regulation and public policies affecting the Hmong; (6) economic development and employment projects; and (7) the Hmong's concerns for their future lives. (KH)

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THE HMONG RESETTLEMENT STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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PREFACE

The Hmong Resettlement Study is a national project funded by the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement. The Study is the joint undertaking of Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (Portland, Oregon), the University of Minnesota and Lao Family Community (Santa Ana, California). Staff from the participating institutions worked as a team to conduct the overall project and the seven case studies and to prepare the Final Report:

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The results of the project are available to the public as a series of reports published by the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO). Copies may be ordered from:

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Vol. 1: Final Report
Vol. 2: Economic Development
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Executive Summary (written in English)
Executive Summary (written in Lao)
Executive Summary (written in Hmong)

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Fresno, California
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Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of the Study

The Hmong Resettlement Study gathered extensive information about the conditions, issues and problems affecting Hmong resettlement in the United States. Information was compiled from a variety of sources, including existing research studies on the Hmong, documentary information sources, indepth on-site case studies of seven selected resettlement communities, and numerous discussions and conversations with Hmong and non-Hmong individuals alike regarding the ongoing process of Hmong resettlement in the United States.

Findings of the Hmong Resettlement Study are reported in three volumes--Volume 1 (Final Report), Volume 2 (Economic Development) and Volume 3 (Exemplary Projects)--and in the seven individual case study reports of the selected communities--Portland (Oregon), Fresno (California), Orange County (California), Providence (Rhode Island), Minneapolis-St. Paul (Minnesota), Dallas-Fort Worth (Texas) and Fort Smith (Arkansas). An overview and discussion of these findings is presented here, within the framework of three major questions originally posed at the outset of this research:

(1) What has been the resettlement experience of the Hmong?

(2) What resettlement efforts and economic strategies have provided effective results for the Hmong?

(3) How might current strategies be changed to result in more effective resettlement and long-term adjustment of the Hmong?

In answer to the third question, recommendations for future improvements in the resettlement process are made.

In considering these findings and recommendations, the reader is reminded to keep two facts in mind: (1) the point of reference in time of this report is approximately mid-1983, soon after the case studies and other data collection activities were completed--naturally many conditions have since changed; and (2) much of the detailed information supporting the findings summarized here is available only in the cited case study reports.

During the course of this Study, it became clear that there are many popular misconceptions or myths about the Hmong and their resettlement experience in the United States. Some of these misconceptions are held by the public at large, others by some resettlement workers and service providers, and some by many Hmong themselves. Although no complete catalog of such myths can be presented here, it may be useful to point out some of them as they relate to the findings considered.

What Has Been the Resettlement Experience of the Hmong?

One of the most important findings of the Study is the variability of Hmong resettlement among different locales. The extent and patterning of economic indicators such as rates of unemployment, labor force participation and welfare utilization as well as the availability of English language and job training vary widely among the sites of Hmong resettlement. Average or population-wide statistics in this regard are quite misleading. It is thus extremely difficult to provide a meaningful overall sense of how the Hmong are faring. Answers must be couched in terms of particular communities. Furthermore, because the majority of

Hmong individuals live in a few large enclaves (in Minnesota and the Central Valley of California), "typical" figures for unemployment or welfare utilization rates may be statistically representative of the largest number of Hmong but not at all representative of the Hmong living in many small communities across the country.

MYTH: Hmong resettlement is faring pretty much the same across the U.S. As will be pointed out throughout this section, the results of this Study are precisely the opposite. The picture of high rates of unemployment and welfare utilization that describes the Hmong in Fresno, for example, is exactly the opposite of conditions prevailing in Dallas.

How Are the Hmong Faring in Terms of Employment, Dependence, and Adjustment?

Community differences and similarities. As noted, economic indicators vary widely across resettlement communities. The seven Hmong communities studied in depth exemplify a range of economic situations, from every household in the community having someone employed, at one extreme, to 80-85% dependence on public assistance, at the other. In Fresno and Orange County, California, and Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, for example, a small percentage of Hmong households have someone employed and dependence on public assistance is very high. In Providence, Rhode Island, and Portland, Oregon, the picture is more balanced: In these communities well over half of the households have someone employed and between 35 and 50% have multiple wage earners; less than a third of the households depend on public assistance to survive.

In the Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, and Fort Smith, Arkansas,* Hmong communities there is nearly 100% employment and no utilization of welfare.

Although in general the Hmong appear to have higher rates of welfare dependence than the population at large in most host communities, the large majority of Hmong families interviewed in the course of this Study reported negative attitudes towards relying on welfare as a means of economic support. Most Hmong see it as only a temporary if necessary evil, needed only for short-term, transitional assistance until they can secure suitable employment to support their families. Most Hmong have a strong work ethic and greatly prefer working and self-reliance to idleness and dependence on public assistance. They are quick to point out that there was no welfare in Laos and they have always supported themselves through their own labor.

Although some welfare and employment service workers believe that many Hmong are lazy and do not wish to work when they can remain on welfare, a careful examination of the Study's data suggests that such individuals are uncommon among Hmong. Some Hmong, with large families to support, poor educational backgrounds and few marketable skills, do not jump at an opportunity to leave the welfare rolls for a minimum wage job that brings home less cash than their welfare benefits and often provides little or no medical coverage. Hmong family heads in such circumstances probably behave as members of other groups do--when faced with strong economic disincentives to working, they remain out of the labor force.

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*The situation in Fort Smith changed shortly after fieldwork for this study was completed. Approximately half of the Hmong there moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where both men and women obtained much higher paying jobs than they had had in Fort Smith. Others moved to Wisconsin or to California.

However, there are many individuals in the case study sites who have chosen to work in spite of the attendant economic loss for their families. The strength of the Hmong work ethic in the face of such powerful disincentives indicates the folly of the following popular misconception:

MYTH: Hmong prefer to stay on welfare instead of working.

Differences among individuals. Beyond the influence of geographic location and related variations in regulations and availability of services, the resettlement experience of the Hmong in this country also varies considerably depending on the characteristics of individual Hmong--the experiences they had in Laos and Thailand, their educational backgrounds, their knowledge of literacy and of English, their exposure to urban life and Western ways, their age and station in life. Here the status of and outlook for groups with specific characteristics are summarized to illustrate the influence of these differences and provide examples of how the Hmong are faring.

1. Well-educated individuals with good English skills and good jobs or independent businesses. By most standards, these individuals have experienced successful resettlement to date and have excellent future prospects. The Dallas-Fort Worth community has a high concentration of individuals with these characteristics although there are some in every community. A good proportion of the Hmong in Dallas are persons who, having studied English, developed job skills and pursued higher education in Laos or elsewhere in the U.S., came to the Dallas area to take advantage of employment opportunities there. Their economic success has enabled some to buy homes. The Dallas-Fort Worth community has probably

the highest ratio of high school graduates and college students to the general Hmong population of any Hmong community in the U.S., and the orientation among the young people is strongly in the direction of success in American terms, i.e., through employment in American business, including electronics and communication. Thus, a significant segment of the Hmong in the Dallas area appears to have already been successfully resettled, with a very good outlook for the future.

2. Workers with limited English, little or no literacy skills, and few job skills. Individuals who fall into this category may appear to be attaining self-sufficiency, but their apparent "success" often has a very temporary quality about it. Some in this group may later suffer serious consequences from having obtained immediate employment and economic self-sufficiency rather than investing in more education or English language and job training. Many are people who have been working but who have not learned English or developed job skills. Many of them are clearly worried about their future, and with good reason. In the secondary labor market, they depend on the economic fluctuations of the community in which they live and even of the nation and the world. Their entry-level jobs have not been stable. Many have been laid off, and many others fear being laid off in the future, particularly because they feel they will be unable to compete for another job due to their limited language and job skills. Even those who are not laid off will find themselves in dead-end jobs; many see little opportunity for advancement without some means of improving their English or job skills or both. Most work at physically difficult jobs or must combine work and child care in such rigorous schedules that they do not have time or energy to attend English classes. In some communities, many in this group are at even higher risk because they have no health insurance.

3. Unemployed individuals with limited English, little or no literacy skills and few job skills. The majority of Hmong adults in this country still fall into this category. Although they would like to find jobs, they feel their limited English and literacy skills are an all-too-effective barrier to filling out job applications or meeting job requirements. They also lack information about the job search process in this society and about the job market. Women in particular, most of whom fall into this category, also cite heavy child care responsibilities and lack of transportation as barriers to obtaining further English instruction, job training or getting a job. These individuals lead an unstable existence fraught with insecurity because of their dependence on public assistance. Most live in large Hmong enclaves and depend on other more educated Hmong (often their children) for help with the demands of daily life. A large number of Hmong are likely to continue this dependent existence, particularly individuals who are over 40 or who have given up on the possibility of learning enough English to be able to participate to some extent in the alien world that surrounds them. Those who hope to improve their lot in the future continue to study English, look for opportunities to make American friends, and seek job training and employment. In the short run, some who do not improve their skills may find entry-level jobs if the economy improves or they move to a location in which there are more jobs. As noted, above, however, such improvements for these individuals may well be temporary.

4. High school dropouts. These young people have dropped out of high school due to age limitations, the cut-off of financial assistance, the pressures of early marriage and growing families, academic difficulties or a combination of such factors. They usually have

relatively limited English skills, a sketchy general education (having entered the educational system very late in their young lives) and no job skills or orientation to employment in this society. In the short-term future the spectre of the "welfare cycle" looms large for these young people. Unable to compete for jobs and without financial support for further education or training, they are likely to fall back on public assistance as a last resort, just as their parents have done. If they are "lucky" they may find entry-level jobs that require only limited English and job skills, in which case their future will resemble the apparent "success" of employed adults with similarly limited skills. Particularly motivated young people may continue to study English and adult education and try to improve the lot of their young families.

5. The elderly. Persons over the age of 40 or 50 who lack education and English ability, as most of them do, generally hold no hope of learning to speak and read English or of obtaining employment. With little possibility of self-employment such as farming, they stay at home, sometimes caring for children while younger adults work. Some older people are content with the relative comfort of their lives here; others long very much for their former self-sufficient rural life in Laos. The outlook for their future here is unlikely to change. Most have the security of knowing that their children will provide for them whatever way they can. As noted in this report, the elderly who have no children feel they are a burden to their relatives and community and face the future with despair.

6. Children. Hmong children seem to have the brightest future--and in fact most Hmong adults pin their hopes for the future on the progress of their children. Elementary school children seem to be adapting with relatively little difficulty--to the extent that their teenage brothers and sisters see them as being very Americanized--"really just about the same like the American kids." Once they enter the school system and overcome the initial difficulties of speaking only Hmong, they make rapid progress and learn to speak English like their native-speaker classmates. Those entering the system at a slightly older age may continue to lag behind their peers in language skills. Academically, Hmong children, especially the girls, may suffer if their parents do not provide sufficient encouragement and support for their studies (such as setting aside quiet space and time to study). When they reach adolescence they may face some educational and social problems if the traditional practices of early marriage and pregnancy are still encouraged by their families and communities. The extent to which this group will continue to marry young, drop out of school and have large families will likely have serious implications for their own self-sufficiency and adjustment. On the other hand, if these children were to return to Laos in the future, they would experience considerable difficulty adapting.

7. High school and college students. Hmong youth straddle two cultures. Often they experience conflicts between the values of the "American" society they encounter in school and with friends who are not Hmong and the traditional Hmong values stressed in their own families and community. In addition to having a strong attachment to their families and to "being Hmong" they often wish to be accepted as American. One

young man described the conflicts he is experiencing as he tries to succeed the American way by attending college, but has to postpone marriage for his goals:

> The leaders don't listen to me because I'm not married . . . in Hmong culture you can't be a man without a family of your own. This value tells Hmong to marry. It is very difficult to be a college student and not married. I want to go to graduate school so that I can help my people. With a wife I can never do that so I'm keeping myself single. Nobody knows the isolation I feel in my heart.

Despite such conflicts, the future of many of these students seems bright. Many are remarkably motivated to succeed with their higher education while at the same time being extremely conscientious about their responsibilities to family and community. In particular they recognize the need to be role models for younger students. A young man in Dallas presented his views:

> I just suggest that young teenagers not get married so soon, because you have to be examples to the young Hmong people to start to make our Hmong people have a good education, higher education so they can make a better living and to make other people understand your job. Don't follow my way, don't get married so soon, don't fool around, just stay in school and do your best and have a bright future. For myself, I am married now, but I still got a plan. I want to be an engineer some day. But I just wish. I am trying hard. Right now, I let my wife graduate from high school and after that we can both go to college together. I don't know what she wants to be, but as for me, I want to be an electronics engineer.

Though these students appear to be following the "American dream," they still intend to take on the responsibility of supporting their parents in their parents' old age and they hope to use the skills they gain through better education to help the Hmong. Most young people see themselves as Hmong and wish to remain Hmong, but armed with skills and knowledge of the larger society in which they now live. The choices that they face are tough and often confusing, but their outlook for the future is positive. As one young man confided:

I think we know it's hard, and we all want a college education. We understand that we might go in the wrong direction and we are worried about that. We want to go in the right direction.

Are There Areas of Employment in Which the Hmong Have Been Particularly Successful?

Although Hmong have worked in a wide variety of jobs in this country, there are several types of work in which many Hmong have been employed: wood and metal fabrication (primarily men); commercial sewing (primarily women); seasonal agricultural labor (men and women); and electronic assembly work (men and women). These categories of employment seem to draw on existing skills or aptitudes that the Hmong bring from Laos; agricultural work, sewing and metal and wood fabrication were valued activities in Laos.

MYTH: **All Hmong want to farm.** There is no evidence that most Hmong see farming as a viable future for them in the United States. Many if not most Hmong express a longing for their former subsistence agricultural lifestyle of the mountains of Laos. Many have also expressed interest in farming here in the United States, particularly if they could be self-employed rather than laboring on someone else's land. However, those who have tried to make it as small farmers have had very mixed economic results, and, as word of the problems that must be overcome (raising capital, learning about irrigation and fertilizers and pesticides, marketing and other aspects of modern commercial agriculture) has spread, fewer families are drawn towards farming. Other Hmong have little interest in farming in the United States because they have developed other occupational goals. In Hmong communities where interest in farming is relatively high (such as in Fresno), community members see farming as just one type of economic activity that families can engage in to become self-sufficient; less than half of the families contacted by the Study in Fresno expressed interest in farming.

What Do Resettlement Workers and the Hmong Regard as the Major Impediments to Effective Hmong Resettlement and Self-sufficiency?

There are a number of barriers that were consistently identified as impediments to effective resettlement, particularly with regard to attainment of economic self-sufficiency. Among the most commonly mentioned factors were:

- the structure of the welfare system, particularly its restrictions on income supplementation, its linking of medical assistance to cash assistance, and in some states the lack of welfare for needy families having two unemployed parents (These and other problematic aspects of the rules and regulations are widely seen as discouraging a gradual transition from dependence to self-sufficiency.)

- radical differences between traditional Hmong life in Laos and life here in the United States, with attendant gaps in the Hmong's educational background, job skills relevant to an industrialized society and English language skills

- psychological and medical problems stemming from years of exposure to civil warfare in Laos with widespread loss of homes and loved ones and the subsequent loss of family members, homeland and lifestyle as Hmong became refugees in Thailand and the United States

- resettlement policies which often placed important relatives far away from one another or in poor economic environments, paving the way for later secondary migration (Others see the secondary migration itself as the problem.)

- traditional Hmong patterns of marrying and having children at an early age, which result in extremely high rates of high school dropouts (particularly among young girls) and, it is widely feared, later dependence on welfare when poorly educated young parents with young children cannot support themselves in the labor market

What Role Does Secondary Migration Play in the Resettlement of the Hmong? What Are the Reasons for Secondary Migration among This Group? What Are the Implications for Resettlement Strategies?

Few Hmong knew much about their destination in the U.S. before arriving here. If they were lucky enough to have been in correspondence with earlier-arriving friends or relatives, they might have received some

news about the climate or living conditions. Those sponsored by Americans did not choose where they were initially resettled. If they have since moved to another location, that site was most likely deliberately selected. The communities of Fort Smith and Dallas-Fort Worth are examples of locations to which nearly all of the Hmong residents very deliberately chose to move based on information about employment, the economy, or opportunities for farming. All of the other communities in this Study have also received secondary migrants bent on improving their lot. Most have also lost large numbers to Fresno and other communities in the Central Valley formed almost entirely by secondary migrants.

Secondary migration has served three overall functions in the resettlement process of the Hmong in the United States: (1) solving specific problems, such as family reunification, access to more favorable economic environments, or the resolution of factional strife between different groups of Hmong; (2) providing a means to explore new settings and ways of living in the United States, e.g., developing family farms, trying rural rather than urban settings, or living in large enclaves rather than smaller, more isolated resettlement communities; and (3) maintaining hope for the future through the psychological renewal experienced through experimentation and movement.

A wide variety of individual motives have been reported for the particular moves made by families and kin groups from one setting to another, in line with these three overall functions. Some of the more commonly cited reasons for moving include: desire to reunite family and kin group members; interest in farming; need to maintain eligibility for public assistance benefits; better employment prospects; escaping from

crime-ridden and prejudice-ridden neighborhoods; better education and training opportunities; preference for a warm climate. In most instances, combinations of these motives prompted the decisions of individual families and groups of families to move from one locale to another.

Several misconceptions have arisen about Hmong secondary migration:

MYTH: Secondary migration is an entirely problematic aspect of Hmong resettlement. The considerable publicity and the many problems that have accompanied the massive influx of Hmong into the Central Valley of California have overshadowed smaller but economically more beneficial migrations, such as those into the Dallas-Fort Worth area and the earlier migration into Orange County, California, both of which were associated with increased Hmong employment. Furthermore, even the large migration into the Central Valley, despite its obvious problems of low labor force participation and high welfare dependence, has had its positive aspects, such as the joy of family reunification (often after years of separation due to the War and its aftermath) and the positive psychological results of Hmong having taken direct (if not altogether promising) steps towards establishing a future in their new country and exploring alternative lifestyles here.

MYTH: All Hmong want to move to the Central Valley. Many Hmong have chosen not to migrate to the Central Valley, but to remain in their primary resettlement sites to maintain their jobs or friendships in the host communities. Others have chosen to move to other areas in search of better prospects for jobs and economic self-sufficiency. In some cases, those who have stayed behind, after others have moved to the Central Valley, now form successful and largely self-sufficient communities, as in Portland.

MYTH: A few prominent Hmong political leaders such as General Vang Pao make all the decisions about the movement of Hmong from one city to another. Although prominent individuals such as General Vang Pao certainly exert much influence over a wide range of issues, decisions to move are generally made at the lineage group and household levels. Groups who have always lived together tend to stick together here and move together. Sometimes individual families choose to stay behind, particularly if they have good jobs and housing and their children are doing well in school. In other cases they will wait and join their group later. Some families are left behind to allow a few to get a toe hold in the new area, establish housing, and test the employment, welfare and social service opportunities available. Still others are deliberately left behind to facilitate the return in case the new location does not work out well.

In examining the role of secondary migration and its implications for the resettlement of the Hmong, the likelihood of further secondary migration must be considered. On the whole, secondary migration has served diverse functions in the process of Hmong resettlement and has led to a mixed set of outcomes. The Hmong, it must be remembered, have been a migrant population for centuries before coming to this country and have long relied on migration as a strategy for adjusting to changing circumstances. Even though thousands of Hmong have chosen to migrate to selected cities within this country, few have profound loyalty to the particular locale in which they are now living. Their main ties to a place are relatives and friends, who can and likely will move with them if they decide to leave. The elements contributing to secondary migration discussed in this report--such as state differences in welfare policies, unemployment and educational opportunities--are largely

structural. In most cases moving once has not eliminated all major problems with available services and opportunities. If the best hope for the future seems to be in another place, many may move again.

Most Hmong in Providence, for example, said they didn't know the best place to live. One man said the Hmong should look for a state that has both jobs and a garden. "The old can work in the garden and the young in the factory." Men in the Twin Cities said they would be willing to go anywhere for a good job. What brought them there, apart from the reunification of families, was the promise of kind treatment and good educational opportunities. What will take them elsewhere now is loss of cash and medical assistance, failure to find employment, or job offers or greater possibilities of supporting themselves somewhere else. The possibility of farming, the security provided by a family garden, and a liberal welfare program to fall back on in case things don't work out are all part of the attraction of the Central Valley of California. Even men who are employed in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, known for its high employment rate and for the opportunities it has offered the Hmong, said without hesitation that they would move if they were to lose their jobs.

There are some Hmong, however, who have made very conscious decisions <u>not</u> to move to another spot. In spite of the very strong pull to move to the Central Valley of California, some Hmong individuals and groups have decided that the very density of large Hmong communities will diminish their possibilities for success. A family with five children in Portland exemplifies this type of decision. They live on a small SSI check which the disabled husband receives and a tiny state grant for a severely retarded child. They decided to stay in Portland, even though they would receive far more public assistance in California. The wife explained:

> I have so many kids. If we moved down there, it would be fun for them--there are lots of Hmong, but they wouldn't learn or study. I stayed here because I have children and they can go to school here and learn.

This woman's husband is a member of a clan that made a concerted decision to try to make it without moving to California, an example of the ways in which kin ties sometimes discourage secondary migration. Nevertheless, individuals in the clan do not rule out the possibility that they might move at some future date.

What Resettlement Efforts and Economic Strategies Have Provided Effective Results for the Hmong?

A wide variety of strategies and approaches to resettlement have been tried by the Hmong and by those seeking to help them adjust to life in the United States. It is very difficult to evaluate these diverse efforts because their outcomes are confounded by differences among the resettlement sites and the Hmong individuals involved. Some efforts may appear "successful" because the particular Hmong individuals involved are highly likely to succeed regardless of the kinds of assistance given to them (because of their high level of motivation or previous education or English ability, etc.), whereas other efforts may appear nearly pointless because they attempt to help the more difficult cases (e.g., the elderly, or those without previous work experience). Other strategies may appear to be working in some settings, but their effectiveness may be tied to particular situations or circumstances; employment strategies operating in areas with a high demand for labor, for example, may well appear successful in terms of how many Hmong find jobs, whereas other approaches will appear unproductive because there are so few jobs available in the

areas involved. In principle, of course, such factors can be taken into account in designing evaluations of particular resettlement approaches and activities, but refugee resettlement has tended to operate, understandably enough, in a crisis-solving manner, and little thought in general has been given to collecting information or planning projects to facilitate assessment of their relative effectiveness. Such limitations must be kept in mind in examining the suggestions below.

How Are Problems Being Handled? What Kinds of Solutions Are Being Tried by Different Resettlement Communities and by the Hmong Themselves?

A variety of approaches to solving problems has been tried in the resettlement of the Hmong communities examined in this Study. Some approaches have been initiated by the Hmong themselves, others by resettlement agencies and individuals working with Hmong.

Hmong strategies. Hmong-initiated strategies in general appear to be extensions of their lifestyle and adjustment strategies from Southeast Asia. As noted above, secondary migration, a widespread response of Hmong communities to resettlement problems, has long been a Hmong problem-solving strategy. It has been used here to solve various problems, including poor employment and training opportunities, unfavorable welfare regulations, community tensions, and separation of family and kin group members. Other strategies used by the Hmong also have roots in their past experience in Laos and Thailand. Hmong families and lineage groups have methodically pooled their resources--housing, capital, labor resources, and skills and knowledge pertinent to life in the United States--to facilitate their adjustment and development here. Families have doubled and tripled up in low-income housing, pooled savings from their meager incomes, and supported the education of their

brightest and most capable youngsters to serve the wider interests of the lineage group. These collective resources have been planfully invested in numerous efforts to stimulate and advance the adjustment of the group to life in the United States; such efforts have included economic development activities (starting small grocery stores or farms, for example) or putting selected children through school (by providing financial support for the selected youngster).

Hmong have also approached problem-solving through reliance on traditional forms of leadership and decision-making. The multiple forms of leadership that developed in Laos and Thailand have all been deployed here in the United States for resettlement purposes. Traditional kin-based leadership and decision-making practices have been used to solve problems related to pooling group resources and migration of families and kin groups from one area to another, for example. When problems arise on other levels, other forms of leadership and decision-making have come into action. In dealing with problems in service provision, education and relationships with host communities, Hmong have relied on their young, relatively well-educated and bilingual individuals for liaison with non-Hmong individuals and resettlement agencies.

Strategies of resettlement agencies and others working with the Hmong. A variety of problem-solving strategies have been used by agencies and others involved in the resettlement process. One of the most effective seems to be the employment of bilingual youth and young adults in key jobs that affect delivery of resettlement services. Placement of such bilingual individuals within agencies serving the Hmong (ranging from the schools to welfare and employment offices) has been an

adjustment strategy that both Hmong and resettlement agencies have relied on for solving problems. Bilingual welfare case workers, employment specialists, teacher aides, medical paraprofessionals, among others, have proved indispensible in larger Hmong resettlement sites, including Portland, the Twin Cities, Providence and Orange County. Their employment is important not only because bilingual, culturally sensitive individuals are necessary for effective service delivery, but also because the participation of these individuals in service provision allows Hmong communities themselves to learn to deal with the complex, institutionalized methods of administration and problem-solving in this country. The Hmong, unlike many other immigrant groups, have very limited prior experience with and understanding of bureaucratic institutions. Although adult ESL and cultural orientation programs provide individuals with a baseline of knowledge about society here, the many subtleties of dealing with educational, health and social service institutions in the United States must be learned from the inside; the employment of bilingual Hmong in such jobs has thus proved very effective for the overall resettlement of the Hmong. This has been accomplished not by employing bilingual Hmong merely as interpreters or translators to assist other professionals, but actually by training and hiring Hmong as professional and technical workers within these agencies.

Other strategies that host communities with large Hmong populations have found effective include <u>coordinating the delivery of services</u> to Hmong across the numerous agencies that normally to work independently of each other. Such coordination of services has been achieved in various ways, including through establishment of refugee service consortia and centralized intake and case management systems. However it has been

implemented, such coordination seems to have facilitated solving problems associated with serving the Hmong; it has provided better channels of communication with Hmong communities and has strengthened linkages among public and private agencies working with the Hmong.

Other problem-solving strategies that seem to work are based on building rapport between Hmong and host communities in various ways. Reducing tensions between Hmong and other ethnic groups, for example, has been facilitated in several cities by sponsoring "cultural fairs" in the schools and by other shared social events for children and adults, such as potlucks and picnics. Appointment of Hmong individuals to serve as liaisons with the police department has improved mutual understanding between police and the Hmong community. Similarly, developing even informal links between the judicial system and the Hmong communities, as has happened in Minnesota and California, has better coordinated Hmong and American ways of handling certain problems (especially family problems).

What Factors Account for the Effective Resettlement of the Hmong in Certain Communities? Which Resettlement Efforts Have Proved to Be the Most Promising?

Internal regulation. As noted above, there are major problems in trying to understand why Hmong resettlement is more "effective" or "successful" in some communities than in others. For example, the high rates of Hmong employment and economic self-sufficiency in the Dallas-Fort Worth area certainly suggest successful resettlement, but this has involved a small number of apparently carefully self-selected individuals able to find work in that particular labor market. By and large, the educational background of the Hmong in that area is much

higher than that of the Hmong in other settled areas. Hmong in Portland, to take another example, became much more self-sufficient after the majority migrated to the Central Valley of California; those who stayed behind tended to be a self-selected group, relatively well adapted to the local economic environment. In both cases, then, the Hmong communities are adjusting successfully, but apparently only insofar as their numbers and capabilities match the supply of available jobs and other economic conditions. An important aspect of both situations is that effective economic adjustment depends on some internal controls within the Hmong community to regulate its size and composition in relation to prevailing economic realities.

Policies which encourage gradual transition from welfare dependence to economic self-sufficiency. One of the major challenges to Hmong household heads has been to maintain a secure "safety net" of income and medical care for their families while gradually obtaining the necessary training and experience to participate in a competitive labor market. The difficulty of accomplishing a gradual transition from welfare dependence to economic self-sufficiency has depended on prevailing local economic conditions and the extent to which regulations in effect have encouraged or discouraged Hmong families on welfare to enter the labor market. Two major examples of how differences in regulations and eligibility over time or among states have influenced the economic adjustment of Hmong follow: (1) Where regulations in effect permit partial income supplementation to families on welfare, Hmong families have participated more heavily in the labor force through part-time employment (of either the primary or secondary earner) and in the process have gained work experience vital to finding full-time work at a later

time. Many families in Orange County and other cities reportedly took advantage of this when they were eligible for refugee cash assistance, which allowed them to work part-time, but later stopped participating in the labor force when their eligibility changed. And (2) the situation in Providence, exceptional among resettlement sites in this regard, provides a continuing incentive for Hmong families on welfare to participate in the labor market through a work-force program that provides partial income supplementation to their public assistance benefits.

Clustered residential patterns. Another apparently important factor in the resettlement process is the opportunity for Hmong to live in clustered residential patterns. Families from a given lineage group not only enjoy living in the same locale, they often wish to be immediate neighbors or in close physical proximity. Such clustering, of course, has been a traditional feature of their lives and is largely bound up with many of their cultural practices. Sharing meals, child care, watching out for one another, not feeling self-conscious about practicing traditional rituals and ceremonies--just feeling good about being Hmong in America and maintaining their ethnic identity--all of these facets of life are easier when closely related Hmong families live together. Possibilities for such clustering have varied widely among resettlement contexts. The happiness and overall adjustment of many families seems to have been closely linked to such living arrangements.

This is a double-edged sword, however. Many Hmong informants and resettlement workers feel that such clustered residence patterns tend to promote the social isolation of Hmong from their host communities, which, it is feared, may slow the overall adjustment process. Obviously there needs to be a balance here between cultural maintenance and

acculturation/adjustment. Hmong themselves need to work out this balance and, in fact, exhibit their different preferences in the various resettlement sites into which they move. At one extreme, the Hmong in Dallas-Fort Worth have no such clustering at all, whereas those living in the large enclaves in California and Minnesota are heavily clustered.

How Many and What Kinds of Entrepreneurial Economic Development Projects Involving the Hmong Are Currently in Operation, e.g., Farming Projects, Pa Ndau Cooperatives? How Were They Developed and How Successful Are They?

Volume 2 of the Study's final reports is devoted to cataloging and analyzing in detail the numerous and diverse economic development projects that have been operated by Hmong. Over 82 projects, including grocery stores, restaurants, service businesses, farming projects and pa ndau sewing cooperatives are detailed. Twenty-two case studies are presented. Analyses of the costs and returns of these projects indicate that despite the Hmong's interest in such entrepreneurial activity, there is no evidence that they are economically productive as primary sources of family income. The calculated rate of return on invested resources is not at all promising.

These results throw some sobering light on a commonly held belief:

MYTH: Economic development projects, particularly ones drawing on traditional crafts and skills such as pa ndau coops, are a viable means for Hmong economic self-sufficiency.

Some projects may nevertheless be worthwhile as secondary income sources for families, particularly if they utilize the labor of a homebound

person who otherwise would not work, e.g., the pa ndau sewing of a person having child care responsibilities.

Projects may also be worthwhile for reasons other than immediate economic return. The many close friendships that have developed between Hmong and Americans collaborating in small businesses and projects most probably have facilitated overall resettlement and adjustment and are providing skills and knowledge to the Hmong participants that may well have long-term economic benefits. Other projects, such as the pa ndau coops, are appealing to Hmong (and non-Hmong) in part because they foster cultural preservation.

The very existence of some Hmong businesses and economic development instills feelings of pride, hope and self-determination throughout Hmong communities. Although such benefits may be intangible, many observers feel that they help maintain the Hmong's positive orientation towards their resettlement in the United States. Even if a small "extended family" grocery story, for example, fails to yield a reasonable economic return, it may promote its members' feelings of hope for the future, of their ability to do something or try something for themselves. Further, such sharing of resources among a lineage group ties a familiar cultural practice to an economic activity in their new country.

What Kinds of Hmong Employment Strategies Have Been Particularly Successful?

Employment projects. In contrast with the economic development projects, cost benefit analysis indicates that resources invested in employment projects (i.e., efforts designed to place Hmong in existing jobs) exhibit an extremely high rate of return. Formal evaluation of only a few such efforts was undertaken, so the available evidence

supports this as only a tentative conclusion and does not allow quantitative contrasts to be drawn among different types of employment projects. Effective approaches seem to be ones which have built closely on existing Hmong skills, have capitalized on the Hmong's reputation as dependable, hard-working employees, and have developed Hmong job-search skills. Both Hmong and non-Hmong persons familiar with the issues of stimulating Hmong employment feel that there are a number of promising strategies:

- Placement of groups of Hmong with the same employer. If a relatively bilingual Hmong is initially hired, it has proved much easier to place other Hmong with that employer, even ones with poor English skills. Once an employer has the means (through a bilingual employee) of solving potential communication problems, the Hmong's reputation of being reliable and hard workers often tips the scale in their favor.

- Planned secondary migration of Hmong to areas where they are highly employable. This holds some promise, but the very mixed set of outcomes reviewed in this Study indicates that it must be handled correctly to solve rather than create problems for the Hmong involved. Considerable attention must be paid to maintaining the integrity and proximity of family and important kin groupings, particularly if the migration is initiated or otherwise encouraged by outsiders.

- Focusing on the array of existing skills and work preferences many Hmong adults bring to this country. Particularly important in this regard have been efforts to draw on the Hmong's penchant for agricultural work, metal and wood fabrication, and sewing.

MYTH: Most Hmong are totally unprepared to participate in the U.S. workforce--they have no useful work experience, skills or knowledge. Although most Hmong had little experience in an urban, industrialized economy prior to coming to the United States, many, in fact, have had experience and developed skills which can be drawn upon by employers. The ethic of working hard and paying careful attention to crops have turned Hmong into some of the most valued farmworkers in this country, even though traditional Hmong farming involved a very different technology than does modern agriculture. The self-sufficient Hmong lifestyle in Laos endowed many with

> excellent manual skills in working with wood and metal and sometimes mechanical skills for small engine repair. Many women have excellent sewing and fabric design skills. Further, probably both the hierarchical nature of Hmong society and the Hmong's extensive military experience under U.S. guidance have endowed most Hmong with attitudes highly valued by employers: They work well together and follow the instructions of established leaders.

How Might Current Strategies Be Changed to Result in More Effective Resettlement and Long-term Adjustment of the Hmong?

Fifteen years ago few could have predicted that 65,000 Hmong people from slash-and-burn farms in the mountains of Laos would be trying to make a new life in the ghettos of Providence or St. Paul, or in the suburbs of Dallas. Today it is equally difficult to say how the Hmong in the U.S. will be doing 15 years from now, or even where they will be. However, discussions with scores of Hmong around the country during the course of this Study have provided a picture of how the Hmong have been faring as they attempt to resettle here, and numerous ideas of ways to improve or facilitate the resettlement process have been suggested, by the Hmong themselves as well as by resettlement workers, officials and others working with the Hmong. Some of these ideas are being actively considered or are on their way to implementation, others remain to be examined critically. The most promising and most pressing of these suggestions are presented here as recommendations of this Study. A final section describes the goals the many Hmong who participated in this Study expressed for themselves.

How Might Resettlement Be Conducted Differently for the Hmong? What New Approaches Are Being Considered by Those Involved in Hmong Resettlement? How Would the Hmong Want Resettlement to Be Done Differently?

Provision of services for the Hmong. Service providers, teachers and others who have been working with the Hmong over the years of their resettlement in this country have often expended enormous energy and good will in their efforts to ease the adjustment of the Hmong to life here. Hmong everywhere gratefully acknowledge such help. However, some general suggestions for improvement emerged from the hundreds of discussions and interviews and meetings with Hmong and Americans involved in the resettlement process, contrasting good with bad experiences and exploring alternative strategies. If certain aspects of Hmong social structure, values and past experience are not taken into consideration when planning for and dealing with the Hmong, no matter how well organized and funded a program is, it is likely to fail to provide adequate and appropriate services. These suggestions relate to interactions between Hmong and Americans in general, no matter the area of service or interest --economic, educational, or social.

As described in this Study, Hmong social structure is based on the extended family and lineage group. The functioning unit is not limited to the nuclear family, as it is for most Americans. Hmong married sons have traditionally brought their brides home to live under the same roof or in close proximity to the sons' parents and male siblings. If some Hmong families have not continued this pattern in their new homes in the United States, it is mainly due to resettlement policies which have placed close relatives in distant cities or to the limitations of available housing. To understand the motivations and actions of the

Hmong and to meet their needs more adequately, individuals and agencies working with Hmong clientele should revise their thinking regarding the social unit targeted for assistance.

RECOMMENDATION: Social units larger than the individual or nuclear family must be considered when providing services to the Hmong. Such units include the extended family and lineage group.

Agencies and programs designed to help the Hmong need to be more aware of the many levels of leadership active in Hmong communities and draw upon their expertise and influence more effectively. Too often the types of leadership most visible to outsiders are not the ones with greatest influence on significant decisions regarding such matters as employment objectives and secondary migration.

Various types of leadership are discussed in this report--lineage group leaders, military leaders, youth group and MAA leaders. Leaders most visible outside of the Hmong community--such as the nationally prominent ex-military leaders and the young bilingual leaders found in MAAs--are not the only leaders who have an impact on major decisions. Lineage group leaders, rarely visible to outsiders, play key roles in making decisions such as which economic opportunities their groups will pursue or where they will live. These leaders, too, need to be acknowledged, considered and consulted when issues arise and when programs are being planned.

RECOMMENDATION: The several types and levels of Hmong leadership must be recognized and consulted when programs and services are planned and implemented.

Americans involved in the resettlement of the Hmong in this country need to increase their understanding of Hmong values and culture and of the ways the Hmong view conditions here in the United States. Open dialogs between Hmong and Americans need to occur about the alternatives available to the Hmong. Discussions need to take place about the goals Hmong have for themselves (see below)--in particular, about the possibility (real or visionary) of returning to Laos versus the possibilities for effective adjustment to life here. Care must be taken because Hmong are naturally reluctant to discuss this with people they do not know well, since they do not wish to appear ungrateful to the United States.

RECOMMENDATION: Americans working to help the Hmong adjust and resettle here should strive to increase their understanding of Hmong cultural values, opinions and goals and always take these into consideration in any effort to serve the Hmong.

A related concern involves the experiences of both the Hmong and Americans during the Vietnam War. Both Hmong and Americans need to be much more conscious of the sensitivities each has regarding the war in Southeast Asia and the role of the Hmong in the secret war in Laos in particular. Many service providers and teachers who were philosophically opposed to the war 15-20 years ago now find themselves trying to help individuals resettle who are here because of their active involvement in that war and their powerful anti-communist sentiments.

RECOMMENDATION: Hmong and Americans should gain greater awareness of the sensitivities each has about the War and, in particular, expectations regarding unfulfilled moral and political promises.

Placement policy. The initial placement policy and process for Hmong refugees has been very problematic. When close relatives (according to the Hmong kinship system) have not been settled in geographical proximity, the individual Hmong families have faced additional adjustment problems, and much costly secondary migration has resulted. The reception and placement process which considers only the nuclear family as the primary social unit to be kept intact should be redrawn for Hmong; larger units, particularly the lineage group, wish to live together--at least in the same city.

RECOMMENDATION: Family groups who have traditionally lived together should be placed together.

Secondary migration. By whatever process the initial placements are carried out, subsequent geographical redistribution of Hmong is likely to take place--if past experience is any guide--in response to both external factors (e.g., changes in local economic conditions) and internal pressures within Hmong communities (e.g., desires to try living in new environments). For policy-makers and service providers attempting to ease the adjustment of the Hmong to life here, the massive Hmong migrations sometimes based on limited information or rumor may seem counterproductive. From a perspective of considerable knowledge about the socioeconomic conditions and services available in a variety of resettlement sites, such moves sometimes seem only to make the resettlement context worse for the Hmnong. However, great care should be exercised to resist well-meaning attempts to influence or control the migration of the Hmong from one area to another. Although many problems have been associated with secondary migration, it has had positive results as well. It is a vital process.

RECOMMENDATION: Secondary migration should not be arbitrarily discouraged in Hmong resettlement.

Several ideas regarding secondary migration are being actively considered by resettlement agencies:

- o planned secondary migration projects designed to encourage groups of Hmong families to move to areas offering them improved economic prospects;
- o targeted assistance projects to local Hmong communities to facilitate local resettlement efforts and retention of families otherwise likely to move to less economically favorable areas; and
- o prioritizing the initial placement of Hmong in "favorable alternative sites," i.e., areas offering excellent chances of rapid employment and short-term self-sufficiency.

However, policies or procedures which focus narrowly on only immediate employment prospects in an area but fail to consider the availability of educational and social services needed to facilitate long-term adjustment have also been problematic; there are numerous cases in which individual families secured employment for the first few years of their resettlement, but had limited or no access to ESL or vocational training during that time and later wound up, when economic conditions changed, without jobs or the skills and knowledge to find work.

RECOMMENDATION: Resettlement policy-makers and service providers must supply the Hmong with solid information about economic and social conditions in numerous areas around the country so that the Hmong may make informed choices about where to live and the types of endeavors in which to invest their energies.

The difficulties experienced thus far with both initial placements and secondary migration indicate how sensitive these issues are to the

Hmong and how carefully they must be planned and implemented in order to work effectively. Of concern is not only the potential self-sufficiency of the Hmong and thus the cost and overall effectiveness of their resettlement as refugees in the United States, but also one of this country's most precious freedoms--the right to live wherever one wishes (and the right to move in pursuit of greater happiness). Such rights have long been prerogatives of Hmong life. However well-intentioned prospective migration-related policies may be, their chances of working effectively will be vastly increased if they are conceived and implemented with great respect for and consultation with Hmong desires and decision-making processes.

RECOMMENDATION: The conception and implementation of resettlement policies which attempt to influence secondary migration should be based on cooperation and consultation with appropriate levels of Hmong leadership to include Hmong interests and decision-making processes.

Economic adjustment. Hmong leaders suggested several ways that the economic adjustment of the Hmong in this country might be improved. The resettlement process must be planned and implemented realistically to provide for a gradual transition from economic dependence to self-sufficiency. Too many families are expected, as it were, to make a sudden transition from a state of welfare dependence--which imposes strong disincentives to the gradual acquisition of work experience and job skills--to a state of economic self-sufficiency--which often demands those very skills and experiences. Innovative income and medical benefit supplementation programs, such as those in Rhode Island, are particularly useful in helping people leave dependence behind.

Although Hmong leaders realize that the welfare system imposes such disincentives on many people besides the Hmong, they feel several approaches to resettlement could be tried to ameliorate the problems posed by the welfare system:

- o either change overall welfare regulations or establish special regulations for needy refugee families that permit a reasonable period for part-time employment and training experience during which cash and medical assistance are available;

- o liberalize public assistance regulations to permit rather than discourage attempts to attain self-sufficiency through self-employed farming (present regulations render a family ineligible for cash or medical assistance if the primary earner works on his or her own farm even though the time lag between the actual farming effort and receipt of income from the first crop is too great to permit the family to subsist without some assistance); and

- o provide a lump sum benefit for Hmong refugees, aggregating the benefits they might otherwise accrue (except for an emergency reserve amount) into a fund that could be used to establish farms, obtain specialized training or provide capital for other eligible activities.

Although the net costs of providing benefits in these ways might be no higher, such ideas could well be politically impractical for a number of reasons. Nevertheless, whenever Hmong leaders react to estimates of cumulative welfare costs for the Hmong, they remark that those funds could have been much more productively diverted towards attaining self-sufficiency in other ways. Rather than stimulating self-sufficiency through more enlightened use of public monies, many Hmong feel that welfare costs are directed towards "keeping people poor." Current policies in most states are viewed as setting people up for failure and continued dependence, rather than as truly "assisting" them during what one would hope is a temporary time of hardship.

RECOMMENDATION: Innovative policies need to be developed which support gradual transitions from welfare dependence to economic self-sufficiency.

Coupled with changes in public assistance policies which will facilitate the transition from welfare dependence to work, the Hmong need more effective job training and placement programs. As this Study found, the long-range economic adjustment of the Hmong in the United States is going to require much higher levels of employment. To become economically self-sufficient, most families will need multiple sources of income or multiple wage earners. Improved access to the labor market through effective job training and good employment programs is critical for promoting Hmong self-sufficiency.

RECOMMENDATION: Job training and employment placement programs must be developed which build on Hmong skills, prepare Hmong for jobs for which there is a demand, and provide for placement and follow-up in such jobs.

Although economic development projects and private enterprises may not be as promising for the economic self-sufficiency of the Hmong as many would like to believe, the development of farming, small businesses and cottage industries still represents a viable source of income for some Hmong. As discussed more fully in Volume 2, there is a clear need for technical assistance and development capital for these ventures. Numerous efforts are already underway, but the need for outside expertise and assistance is great.

RECOMMENDATION: More technical assistance and development capital should be made available for Hmong private economic ventures.

Provision of English language training. This research and other studies as well have clearly shown that for Hmong adults--particularly

individuals with little or no previous education or literacy skills (the majority of the Hmong)--acquisition of English is a slow process. Limitation of ESL provision (to 6 months, for example) reflects unrealistic assumptions about the rate of English acquisition and ignores individual differences as well. In all communities studied, people requested more English training.

A major finding is that most employed individuals are not learning English on the job. If people's skills in English are low when they enter a job, in all likelihood they have found a job which requires little or no English and which offers few opportunities for using English. To advance on the job or be able to find future employment, these working adults need continued English language training.

RECOMMENDATION: The eligibility of Hmong adults to participate in English language training should not be arbitarily limited in duration.

The Study results also indicate that adult ESL training should be based more on the practical language uses and needs of the Hmong. In particular, job-related English should be a major focus. Similarly, Hmong adult students of ESL need greater opportunities to use English in social situations outside the classroom. Language instruction should be approached in terms of Hmong social networks and interactions with native English speakers. This is particularly important for the many Hmong who live in large enclaves and have virtually no contact with native English speakers.

RECOMMENDATION: ESL training should focus on practical, real-world applications of the language, especially job-related English. Innovative programs need to be devised that will encourage contacts between Hmong and non-Hmong.

In many of the communities studied here, Hmong adults have been placed in classes designed for other ethnic groups; often such classes do not meet the specific needs of Hmong students. Increased use of bilingual aides is needed, particularly to provide indepth orientation for previously unschooled adults regarding the process of education, what is expected of them--as well as what is expected of their children, so that they may be more supportive and encouraging regarding their children's education. Bilingual aides should also provide information about social and economic issues of concern to these adult students.

RECOMMENDATION: Whenever possible, ESL training for Hmong should be designed and presented in ways that address Hmong-specific needs.

Structural barriers such as convenient class hours and locations and provision of child care and transportation when appropriate are serious concerns for many of the Hmong who most need to improve their English. Included in this group are home-bound women and individuals who work and have difficulty fitting English class into their already demanding schedules of work and child care.

RECOMMENDATION: Provision of English language instruction for Hmong adults should consider structural barriers to their participation and attempt to accommodate work schedules and child care needs in particular.

Education of Hmong children. The future of the Hmong in this country will largely depend on the successful education of their children. This is a heavy responsibility for both the school children and their parents and one that Hmong youth do not take lightly. Every effort should be made to facilitate their schooling.

Given the high birth rate of the Hmong and the tendency of the Hmong to reside in large enclaves in which little English is spoken, elementary school educators in communities with large Hmong populations must anticipate the continued influx into kindergarten and first grade of large numbers of Hmong children who do not speak English. For these young children just entering the school system, relatively short-term bilingual and/or ESL classes can ease their adjustment to school and promote their rapid acquisition of English.

RECOMMENDATION: Elementary school educators should anticipate the need and provide bilingual and/or ESL classes for newly enrolled monolingual Hmong speakers.

Although most students in the middle grades and high school seem satisfied with the ESL training they are receiving, criticisms by teachers and students point out the need for individualized policies regarding the amount and nature of the training. Some students want less initial emphasis on written English and preparation for mandated graduation competencies until their oral skills develop appropriately. Others who speak English fluently report having considerable difficulty with writing; they stress the need for special writing instruction (even after they have left ESL programs) to prepare them to go on to college.

RECOMMENDATION: ESL instruction should be sensitive to the abilities and goals of each student, particularly to the practical uses they wish to make of the language.

Students who do not plan to continue their formal education beyond high school need more opportunities for learning about the world of work and for developing specific skills which will help them find jobs and

keep them. Knowledge of the types of employment available in this society, the qualifications for particular jobs, the job-search process, as well as appropriate behavior on the job, are all areas about which students need more information.

RECOMMENDATION: More opportunities for vocational training should be offered Hmong students, particularly those not pursuing a college education.

Even college-bound, bright optimistic young people are often unclear about their options. Hmong youth across the country expressed the need for improved counseling and orientation about career and educational options. Hmong youth in small communities, whose schools do not have bilingual counselors, have a particular need. College students are concerned that lack of future orientation and lack of knowledge about how to plan their lives prevent many Hmong youth from succeeding in school and at work.

RECOMMENDATION: Improved vocational and educational counseling needs to be provided for Hmong youth.

Special efforts need to be focused on the plight of many Hmong adolescents and young adults who are forced to drop out of school for lack of financial support. There are several different types of support which could be offered, including (1) scholarship funds for college students; (2) continued public assistance for high school students who are trying to complete their education; and (3) support for the numerous Hmong student associations that have developed and already attempt to counsel students on financial matters and educational options.

RECOMMENDATION: Programs need to be designed to provide financial support for Hmong youth to complete high school.

How Can the Hmong Be Resettled in a Way That Better Utilizes Their Strengths and Unique Characteristics?

The Hmong have a number of strengths and characteristics that could be better utilized for more effective resettlement: (1) their cohesive social structure which gives them abilities to work closely together and share resources to achieve common goals; (2) their internal leadership and decision-making processes; and (3) their orientation towards independence and self-sufficiency.

Resettlement workers are always struck by the cohesiveness of Hmong extended families and lineage groups. Even when living on meager incomes, Hmong readily pool their resources to buy cars, start farms and other businesses, bring relatives over from Thailand, and move across the country. Within Hmong lineage groups, such sharing is natural and has been going on for centuries, as have practices of pooling labor to achieve common goals (e.g., building homes).

RECOMMENDATION: Programs should be developed that take advantage of the Hmong's group orientation and enhanced collective capabilities.

Perhaps loan or matching grant programs (or even some form of the aggregated public assistance alternative mentioned above) could be made available to qualified groups for endeavors such as land purchase, farm development, reciprocal labor to build homes, or other projects in which Hmong have repeatedly expressed interest. Many such activities are not feasible if the individual family is taken as the unit of resettlement.

Once again, as determined regarding placement and migration activities, it is critical to deal with not only the nuclear and extended family but also larger Hmong kin groups. If such an approach is adopted, it is equally critical that the appropriate social groups be used. Attempts to establish dues-paying or resource-sharing arrangements across traditional kin groups have met with major problems in several cities. Hmong patterns of trust and cooperation should be respected.

To implement group-oriented programs, resettlement workers must become familiar with the varied forms of Hmong leadership and decision-making described in this report. The "leaders" most visible and accessible outside the Hmong community naturally tend to be younger, more bilingual and bicultural individuals. Although they are easy for resettlement agencies to work with, other levels of leadership must be understood and involved in the types of decisions called for here.

The Hmong place an extremely high value on living according to their own sense of freedom and self-determination. Economic self-sufficiency was always a part of their life prior to becoming refugees. They still long for such independence in this country, even though most realize it must be attained in a very different way. Nevertheless, Hmong are willing to work extremely hard to progress economically and, when they do have jobs that can support their families, rarely fail to impress employers with their hard and dedicated work.

The Hmong also place great value on their children's education, even though many parents have never been to school and do not know how to help and support their children with their schooling. Nevertheless, the children are clearly the links between education and the future self-sufficiency, independence and well-being of the Hmong in America and

the Hmong recognize this. Both parents and children will benefit from efforts to include the parents more in monitoring the educational progress of their children.

What Do the Hmong Want for Themselves? What Do Hmong View as Essential for Effective Resettlement? What Are Their Goals for the Future? For the Next Generation of Hmong?

Fundamental concerns underlying successful resettlement. As noted above, the Hmong have strong desires to control their own destinies in this country, as they have always done in Southeast Asia. This translates into a number of fundamental concerns. Most Hmong wish to live together in their traditional kin groups--this does not mean, however, that all Hmong wish to live in the same city. Hmong who adhere to traditional religious beliefs need the physical freedom to live in an environment in which they can practice their rituals without undue interference from their neighbors. Like all peoples, Hmong wish to live without excessive fear and vulnerability to crime, discrimination and prejudice. Hmong wish to maintain a sense of their heritage and ethnic identity. For many, this desire manifests itself as dreams if not expectations of returning to the ancestral home and lifestyle of Laos. For many other Hmong--indeed, for countless other immigrants before them--dreams of returning home are only a metaphor for cultural maintenance and the vision of someday having the freedom to return home; they are nevertheless committed to a future here.

Hmong goals for the future. The implications of this Study for the future of the Hmong should and must be determined to a large extent by what the Hmong envision for themselves. Thus it is fitting to conclude

with a summary of Hmong goals for the future. The dream of returning to Laos is discussed first, followed by the goals of individuals attempting to shape their future here.

1. The dream of returning to Laos. Some Hmong cannot consider any future in this country. Many of the elderly, some women who are heads of households, and some others have lost hope concerning their ability to succeed here. They long for a return to their former life in Laos--a different land and a different time.

The elderly and other individuals with little faith in the present, let alone the future, in the U.S. are not the only people who think about returning to Laos. Most Hmong would like to go back if they could return to the way their lives were before the war tore them from their homes and villages. Many, however, also realize that that time may never come again. Feelings about returning to Laos range from a desire to stay here because at least the children will get an opportunity, to an intense desire to go back and resume fighting. Some men have expressed outright the willingness to follow General Vang Pao back to Laos and fight to retake the country from the communists. Others comment they never planned to stay in the United States permanently, rather they came to get away from the war for a while and get some training, then return to Laos when the situation stabilizes. The majority of those who would like to go back would return only if the communists left and there was no more war. Most Hmong are tired of war.

Although this desire to return to Laos seems very strong and very widespread (for example, 86% of the population surveyed in the Twin Cities), a much smaller number think of it as a realistic possibility. Nostalgia for the homeland and the old life are felt, of course, by most

immigrants. How much does this desire to return home affect the motivation of the Hmong to adapt to life in the U.S.? Does this cherished dream help people through the hard times here or merely serve as an added barrier to their successful adjustment?

High school students in Orange County, themselves bright and optimistic, explained their parents' dream of returning to Laos: "Because they have no education and they just stay home, that's the reason they want to go back to Laos. Every which way is blank for them so that's the only dream."

Several Hmong commented that one reason life was better back in Laos was because individuals experienced more freedom there. In Laos, before the war and the communist victory, there was a different kind of freedom: a freedom to live however one liked without government intervention. Hmong complain there are too many rules and regulations here. One is always dependent on someone else to stay alive, and it is hard to continue life in the Hmong way. In Laos, the Hmong could settle and till the land in the mountains; through hard work they had control over their destinies and government was far away. People could live the Hmong way without intervention. They could grow food, build a house or move almost anywhere they liked. In the U.S., as an impoverished population, the Hmong experience severe restrictions on their way of life.

Some people have suffered a growing disillusionment with life in the United States. One man, who arrived in 1976, said that when he first arrived he was very excited about being in the United States. He felt this was where he could build a new life and forget about Laos. He had this attitude for about a year, but then he slowly became disillusioned. This man has done well materially, he speaks English and has a good job,

but the longer he lives here the more uncomfortable he feels. Now he feels as if he is in jail. Others, particularly the young people who can no longer remember their lives in Laos, have little interest in returning and, in fact, if they ever did return would be likely to suffer culture shock there. As a student in Orange County noted:

> I think the younger kids are really just about the same like the American kids; they don't remember that much about Laos. They want to be the same as American kids. They feel like they need to belong and not feel separate.

Although General Vang Pao has continued to talk about a possible return to Laos, he emphasizes the fact that the welfare of the Hmong in the United States takes priority at the present time (interview with Vang Pao in St. Paul, December, 1982). In a speech given in Hmong to the Hmong in the Twin Cities in 1981, General Vang Pao admonished them to take any job that is offered, to be assertive in seeking jobs, to establish businesses to serve their own community, and to work toward becoming American citizens.

2. Hmong goals for life in the United States. When Hmong people in the Twin Cities were asked about their plans for the future, very few had a well-developed sense of how they would like to live. Although they may worry about funding cuts or getting a job, most seem to have difficulty envisioning specifically how they would like to have their life proceed in this country. Out of their traditional environment, aspiring to a new and different life and planning for multiple adjustments is a novel problem for many Hmong. It is difficult to conceive of life 5 years or 10 years from now when the possibilities are unknown. Lack of information about the options available makes setting specific goals and making plans to achieve them nearly impossible.

Most Hmong would agree that their overriding goal here is to achieve self-sufficiency. Despite problems of discrimination, poor health, crowded housing, not to mention the great personal losses they have suffered in the course of war and exile from their homeland, the main concern of most Hmong--and it is of great concern to them--is to have the possibility of working to earn enough to meet their basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, transportation and medical care. Where people differ is in describing the best way to reach that goal. The means to the goal depend on how individuals view their own backgrounds and capabilities as well as what they know about the economic environment in which they live. For some the most pressing need is to get a job that will provide an adequate and reliable source of income to support their families. Others, who may be less certain about the job market or their present level of English and job skills, feel that the only way to reach the goal of having a job is by first improving their English skills and by getting job training. Many in other communities would agree with the Hmong in the Twin Cities who feel that additional monetary assistance is needed while they obtain necessary training if they are to succeed in their goal of becoming "good," productive, and self-reliant citizens.

The goals of many of the more educated Hmong, who for the most part already have adequate incomes, seem centered around the possibilities of owning their own businesses, which could provide employment for other Hmong. As noted, numerous businesses already exist around the country, ranging from small grocery stores (the most popular type of business thus far) to a security guard agency.

The goals of successful high school and college students also go beyond self-sufficiency. These young people are thinking in terms of

American-style "careers" and of leadership roles in their communities. Some want to be lawyers or doctors, others (as in Dallas-Fort Worth) plan to be engineers and take advantage of the high-tech opportunities where they live. Some are studying business management. Most of these students are strongly committed to using their skills to help their communities any way they can. They would like Hmong to be the ones responsible for the upcoming generation of Hmong, rather than continuing to leave so much problem-solving in the hands of others. The Hmong student organizations that exist in Dallas-Fort Worth, Orange County, Fresno, the Twin Cities and elsewhere exemplify the willingness of Hmong youth to play a determining role in the future development of their communities. On the whole, they take their responsibilities to their families and the Hmong community very seriously, volunteering or working extra hours, often at considerable personal hardship, while they study to reach their goals.

These young people aspire to have the freedom to be able to pursue their individual educations, careers and other goals while still participating fully in the cycle of Hmong life. They need the support and assistance of both the Hmong community and resettlement programs, for they truly are the future of the Hmong.